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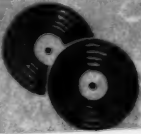
The American **RECORD GUIDE**

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OCTOBER, 1951 - VOL. 18, No. 2

Edited by
Peter Hugh Reed
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The American RECORD GUIDE



OCT. 1951 • Vol. XVIII, No. 2

formerly

The American Music Lover

Editorial Notes

In our last editorial notes, we omitted to say that we were aware that Stuttgart is in the U. S. Zone of Germany. Curiously, when we first made inquiries on this at the Post Office, we were misled to believe it was in the Russian Zone.

The correspondence resulting from our editorial last month on Politics and Recording has been gratifying. One New York reader, Mr. Edward Hill, sums up the situation very sensibly. He writes: "Congratulations on your eminently sensible editorial in your September issue. A pox on the politicians, they are largely the same gentry who maintained seemingly silence during Hitler's genocidal orgies. Perhaps it would be better if those malcontents eschewed records altogether and transferred their devotion to maps printed on crying towels."

Another correspondent, Mr. W. L. Sisson, of Pine City, N.Y. writes: "It has long been a puzzle to me why, when an artist's musical ability has not been in any way affected, a musician who becomes associated with some unfavorable political group is persecuted by public opinion. I am very glad that one, so prominent as Mr. Reed, also supports my idea that politics should not interfere with fine music — recorded or otherwise."

"More editorials as outspoken and in support of as important ideas, as was the September one, will certainly be most welcome."

* * *

A reader from San Francisco writes us that, in his opinion, our reviewer missed

the significance of the *Styles of Famous Composers on Mary Had a Little Lamb* (Festival LP 70-210) (see review on page 407, August 1951). "I am enclosing a review by Alfred Frankenstein of the *San Francisco Chronicle* in which you will observe a just tribute is given the composer."

"Variations on a familiar theme in the style of different composers," writes San Francisco's foremost critic, "are uncommon enough in the literature of musical pleasantries . . . There is, however, one set of variations 'in the manner of . . . ' which for years has had the universal respect of the musical profession as a model of tact, skill and shrewd creative criticism. It is Edward Ballantine's *Mary Had a Little Lamb*,"

Your editor has long known and admired these variations, especially the first series which Technichord recorded some years ago. He has used them many times in lectures and played them frequently for friends and musicians in his home. It is unfortunately true that only "a few of these pieces at one sitting" have been appreciated. The average listener does not seem aware of Ballantine's ingenuity — his uncanny insight into the style of different composers, or that, as Mr. Frankenstein says, "he knows how to get inside of a style and build outward toward the tune from its inwardness." The failure to appreciate the many rather than the few may be blamed on the fact that the majority of listeners have their likes and dislikes among composers.

Probably most listeners are tempted to think that these variations are trivial because they are based on the nursery song *Mary Had a Little Lamb*. In this case, such a viewpoint is an injustice.

These unique and ingenious little compositions, we are told, were the work of years of study of the various composers' styles, and most of them were written, revised, subjected to criticism, and re-revised long before their publication. There was wisdom in the selection of a simple tune like that of Mary and her lamb, as an original tune might not have been as easily identified and remembered. Ballantine's first series of variations on ten composers was published in 1924. His second series, also on ten composers, was published in 1943.

Our reviewer, Mr. James G. Roy, Jr.—a professional pianist and teacher—has played some of these variations in concerts. The "ironic ones," such as the Stravinsky *Sonata in Less than One Movement*, the Strauss *Superlamb* and others of the second series, have proved less successful with most audiences. They seem to prefer the "Loveable ones" like the Mozart *Agnello in C*, the Schubert *Demi-Moment Musical* and MacDowell *At a Lamb*. All these variations are extremely clever and not superficial and of definite interest to those who do not listen simply for amusement—each is definitely entertaining in its own way. That they are intended as more or less serious parodies is borne out by the composer's elucidating notes on Festival's LP disc.

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Irmgard Seefried



Elisabeth Höngen



Sena Jurinae

A HOME FESTIVAL OF OPERA

MOZART — WAGNER — VERDI — BIZET — GERSHWIN

MOZART: *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Opera in 4 Acts); **Italo Tajo** (Figaro), **Alda Noni** (Susanna), **Fernando Corena** (Dr. Bartolo), **Miti Truccato Pace** (Marcellina), **Jolando Gardino** (Cherubino), **Sesto Bruscantini** (Count Almaviva), **Angelo Mercuriali** (Don Basilio), **Grabiella Gatti** (Countess Almaviva), **Cristiano Dalamangas** (Antonio), **M. P. de Leon** (Don Curzio), **Graziella Sciutti** (Barbarina), **Orchestra and Chorus of Radio Italiana** conducted by **Fernando Previtali**. Cetra-Soria LP set 1219, 3 discs, \$17.85.

MOZART: *Le Nozze di Figaro*; **Erich Kunz** (Figaro), **Irmgard Seefried** (Susanna), **Marjan Rus** (Dr. Bartolo), **Elisabeth Höngen** (Marcellina), **Sena Jurinae** (Cherubino), **George London** (Count Almaviva), **Wilhelm Felden** (Antonio), **Erich Majkut** (Don Curzio), **Rosl Schwaiger** (Barbarina), **Elisabeth Schwartzkopf**, **Vienna State Opera Chorus and Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra** conducted by **Herbert von Karajan**. Columbia LP set SL114, 3 discs, \$16.73.

▲WE ARE, in a way, being surfeited with performances of Mozart's operas — to say nothing about his other works. Victor will soon issue its LP version of the old Glyndebourne recordings, which have been cherished for years by many. If a listener has grown tired of the four-minute breaks in the old 78s and feels his set is worn from countless playings, now is the time to consider a new recording. One may choose to buy the Victor LP version, but there are these two new performances that deserve recognition. It is not a matter of finer quality of reproduction but a matter of artistic merit which cannot be ignored.

The style of singing, required by Mozart's music, varies with different nationalities, conductors and artists. Thus, we find von Karajan's tempos somewhat faster than Previtali's. This, I am told, is in the Viennese tradition. The former aims for an orchestral precision that often forestalls the graciousness and subtle fluency of Fritz Busch, while Previtali, with his true Italian temperament, strikes a middle course that serves the singers to advan-

tage. The Italian orchestral playing is warmer hued and often richer toned, but it is also somewhat heavily weighted, which has to do with reproductive quality. The Viennese recording is more alive with hall resonance that supplies on occasion that ghostly echo to terminating high tones by the singers, while the Italian recording is more intimate with its studio quality. The realism in the latter is with the singers, though the orchestral quality has naturalness of sound similar to that found in a small theater.

Varying Merits

The merits of these two sets vary — neither is completely satisfactory. The Italian one has the overall merit of being more complete, as it includes the recitatives which are essential to the full understanding of the intrigue that motivates the plot of Beaumarchais' comedy. The Glyndebourne performance, and also this new Viennese one, omits the recitatives and skips from one musical number to another, which, owing to divergent key relationships, prevents essential smoothness in musical continuity. The recitatives, which are sung to harpsichord accompaniment, link the musical sequences in the right manner.

The singing in the Viennese set is consistently on a high level and in some cases in finer tradition. But the Italian performance has a sparkle and a liveness characteristic of the Latin race, and everybody is completely at home in the language. I cannot remember when I have heard the delivery of the recitatives more tellingly handled. This has been often called a lost art, but Italian singers have a dramatic flair for it which often helps to animate the action — in the case of the phonograph it has its added value. Neither Tajo nor Kunz is artistically comparable to Domgraf-Fassbaender as Figaro. For the former, a basso, finds the music lies too high and his singing is rather rough. Too, one is reminded from the record that his characterization places too much accentuation on the "Figaro strut." But Tajo handles his recitatives convincingly and

he seems to enjoy himself. Kunz has the better style and the smoother singing line, but he has not the firm upper tones of Domgraf-Fassbaender.

Alda Noni's characterization of Susanna is ingenuous and youthfully animated. Her voice is bright in tone and agreeable in quality. Seefried's art is more intimate — her singing more subtly shaded. Her Susanna is a less vivid personality and she does not always convey its arch-gaiety. Yet, for ear appeal, she and Schwartzkopf are unmatched. The singing of the latter has all the beauty of style required, and the sweetness and sensibility of her voice ingratiate the role. Yet one is tempted to wonder whether hers is not the more natural voice for Susanna. Gatti's Countess conveys a woman of aristocratic bearing who schools her emotions. Her vocal line, always clear and well phrased, is governed by her artistic restraint. Both Jurinac's and Gardino's Cherubinos are well sung, but the latter's is the more believable impersonation of a youth.

An Italian Count

Bruscantini's Count is a human and believable impersonation, though not always as smoothly sung as it might have been. The Count's big aria, *Vedro, ment'io sospiro*, is omitted in the Cetra set but included in the Columbia one. The American basso George London, who is to make his first appearance this season at the Metropolitan, is vocally less persuasive than Roy Henderson's in the Victor recording. His singing of the big aria in the third act finds him in difficulties at the end. While he conveys the dignity of the character, his impersonation lacks the fullest distinction.

The remainder of the cast of both performances is surprisingly good; a word of commendation is deserving for Rosl Schwaiger's Barbarina. Her singing of the charming cavatina, which opens the fourth act, will be remembered.

The interested reader is urged to hear both performances. Recommendation of one above the other seems hardly fair,

unless one is motivated entirely by quality of reproduction, in which case the Columbia set takes definite precedence over the Cetra as well as the Victor.

—P.H.R.

MOZART: *Die Zauberflöte* (Opera in 2 Acts); **Wilma Lipp** (Queen of the Night), **Irmgard Seefried** (Pamina), **Anton Dermota** (Tamino), **Erich Kunz** (Papageno), **Ludwig Weber** (Sarastro), **Peter Klein** (Monstratos), **Emmy Loose** (Old Woman and Papagena), **Sena Jurinac**, **Friedl Reigler**, **Else Schurhof** (Three Ladies), **Hermine Steinmassl**, **Eleonore Dorpinghaus**, **Annelies Stuckl** (Three Spirits), **George London** (Sprecher), **Erich Majhut**, **Harold Proglhoff** (Two Priests), **Singerverein der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde**, **Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra** conducted by **Herbert von Karajan**. Columbia set SL-115, 3 discs, \$16.73.

▲MOZART'S *Magic Flute* has never been as popular in the opera house as his *Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*. The intricacies and absurdities of Schikaneder's story and libretto are as involved as they are incredulous. However, much of the atmosphere of magic and the allegory can be understood if one takes the trouble to acquire an elementary knowledge of the history and principles of Freemasonry, which prompted the writing of this opera. It can be said that the majority of any audience in this country hardly understand the spoken recitatives in German and hence miss much of the plot's significance. The spoken dialogue is omitted in this recording, as it was previously done; however, the listener can easily acquaint himself with its significance as a libretto is provided with this set.

Despite the beauty of much of the music of this opera, I have never been one to agree that *The Magic Flute* is one of Mozart's successful stage achievements. *Don Giovanni* and *Figaro* are unassailable as such. Yet one cannot deny that the score is a supreme masterpiece. The late George Bernard Shaw once wrote that

the *Magic Flute* "has a discomforting consciousness of virtue, an uphill effort of aspiration about" it, and, further, that it remains "a mere extravaganza, except to those who see in [it] . . . a real drama of which their own lives form a part."

The second act is unduly long, despite the fact that there is continuous loveliness in the music of the ensembles of strange characters as well as in the arias of the principals. At a later date, in taking John Ruskin to task for his "virtuous indignation" in writing about this opera, Shaw reverses himself: "The generation which would see nothing in *Die Zauberflöte* but a silly extravaganza was one which Mr. Ruskin certainly belonged to in point of time; and he has for once sunk to the average level of its thought in his shallow criticism of the work which Mozart deliberately devoted to the expression of his moral sympathies. Everything that is true and vital in his worship of music would be shattered if it were a fact — happily it is not — that the music of Sarastro came from a silly and trivial mood." (It is, however, a fact that Sarastro is still labeled a bore by many people.) It should be pointed out that Mozart, when he wrote this opera, substantiated his genius, for in its music he affirmed — as he did in his *Così fan tutte* — that an absurd libretto could not vitiate his art.

In the face of the existing Beecham-directed performance, which will soon be available on LP discs, one cannot but admire the persevering spirit of Columbia in arranging for this rendition. There was wisdom in turning to Vienna for this recording, as there has been an increasing evidence in the past year that Vienna boasts some of the best post-war operatic artists. The selected cast for this performance is generally excellent — far better than any we have had at the Metropolitan in recent years. The production is also a well-directed one, excellently recorded in the approved manner of opera from the phonograph — which provides realism in sound and an equitable balance between voices and orchestra. Techni-

cally, the reproduction is superior to the Beecham set because the frequency range is more extended. But van Karajan's well-disciplined orchestral direction is not comparable to Beecham's. There is none of the latter's refinement and elaboration of detail. However, von Karajan's firm beat maintains orderliness and unanimity. I would not call his direction self-effacing, though one can forget his guiding hand more often than not when the singers have the spotlight — something one does not do with Beecham. The latter, however, reveals new insights into Mozart's world of music — like no one else I know — as he who lives intimately with his recording will surely realize.

A Firstrate Cast

As for the new singers, there is not a poor one among the lot; even the secondary parts are allotted to good voices. Comparisons — though inevitable — should be fairly made. The distaff side has been well chosen. The youthful Wilma Lipp handles the difficult coloratura passages of her two arias with skill. But the dramatic significance of her scenes is not fully realized — in the first, with her youthful voice she does not quite provide the true impression of a mother's grief. In the second, the lightness of her voice does not fully substantiate the character's fierce hatred. But the freshness and beauty of her singing satisfies — hers is a much better Queen of the Night than I have heard locally in recent years, as Erna Berger no longer is the successful interpreter of this role that she was in 1938.

Seefried's Pamina has its genuinely lovely moments. Her voice is lighter than Lemnitz's. Though her singing has artistic beauty, she does not make this character quite as vital as her predecessor, and it is rather difficult to believe she is the daughter of Lipp's Queen of the Night.

Among the male artists, Kunz proves himself a fine Papageno. His voice does not have the weight and stamina of Hüscher, but his over-all interpretation equally satisfies for its finely modeled vocal line and his treatment of the comic elements of the

character. Dermota's Tamino is more lyrical and less hard-driven than Roswaenge's. Some tendency to croon on occasion and to be over-sentimental does not seem to me in keeping with the character. Ludwig Weber's Sarastro is sung with dignity and restraint — his characterization suggests better the sagacious and saintly High Priest than did the youthful Strienz.

To say that honors are about parallel would seem the fairest estimation and — as in the case of *Figaro* — the final decision on preferences will remain with the individual listener, and may very well be determined by an interest in an LP version.

—P.H.R.

VERDI: *La Traviata* (Opera in 3 Acts);
Licia Albanese (Violetta), Jan Peerce
(Alfredo), Robert Merrill (Germont),
Maxime Stellman (Flora), John Gar-
ris (Gastone), George Cehanovsky
(Baron Douphol), Paul Dennis (Mar-
quis D'Obigny), Arthur Newman (Doc-
tor Grenvil), Johanne Moreland (An-
nina), Chorus and NBC Symphony
Orchestra conducted by Arturo Tos-
canini. RCA Victor LP set LM-6003,
2 discs, \$10.90 (also 45 rpm set).

▲IT IS astonishing to realize that this is the first full length opera conducted by Toscanini to appear on records. Rumors persist that others will follow. Like this one, which was taken from an NBC broadcast in December 1946, the others would emanate in the same way. For it is unlikely that Toscanini would make a full-length opera only for records. It is obvious from the opening bars in this recording that Victor engineers have, by technical means at their disposal, given more resonance to the reproductive sound from Studio 8-H than listeners heard over the air in 1946. But, in so doing, some of the magic of Toscanini's subtle dynamics have been slightly altered — thus, in the opening Prelude, *pianissimo* passages are not as caressingly soft as remembered in the broadcast studio. But the over-all sound is more satisfactory. And though the singers were placed directly before the

microphones with the orchestra behind them, the balance is equitable, with the result that the Toscanini orchestra remains ever present.

This is Toscanini's show, and what a show it is. Has anyone ever given such marked definition to Verdi's melodies? The whole texture of the score is clarified and given an incandescence of sound, a dramatic animation and emphasis like none previously heard. The pacing is intensified — some might say quickened — which does not always substantiate the sweetness and grace of the ever-present waltz tempi. But the manner in which he points up the detail in the orchestral background of the arias is memorable.

The artists, under Toscanini's direction, sing with rare musicality. Liberties have not been permitted and few changes in the tessitura of arias allowed. Toscanini is adamant on this score. The greatest performance is given by Miss Albanese. She lives the part of Violetta in a way that retards memories of other singers before her. Her artistic skill is substantiated in the knowing use of her voice, the beauty and coloring of her tones, and the changing inflections occasioned by her wonderful projection of the text. Mr. Peerce's Alfredo is expressively sung and so too is Mr. Merrill's Germont, but neither emerges the vivid personality that Albanese is. Moreover, the character and quality of their voices fail to sustain the illusion of son and father. The balance of the cast is competent and adequate in its parts, the chorus, trained by Peter Wilhousky, is first rate. But, in the end, we return to the Maestro — his is the supreme individuality that lives not only the role of the director but the parts of the characters. If you listen closely, you will hear the Maestro's foggy voice singing faintly in the background on occasion, which surely testifies to his great love of Verdi's timeless melodies.

—P.H.R.

BIZET: *Carmen* (Opera in 4 Acts): Suzanne Jyyol (Carmen), Libero De Luca (Don José), Janine Micheau (Micaëla), Julien Giovannetti (Esca-

nillo), Marcel Enot (Morales), Denise Boursin (Frasquita), Jacqueline Cau-chard (Mercédès), Jean Vieuille (El Dancaïro), Serge Rallier (El Remendado), Henru Medus (Zuniga), Pierre Germain (Lillas Pastia), Orchestra and Chorus of the Opéra-Comique, Paris, conducted by Albert Wolff. London LP set LLP-437, 3 discs, \$17.85.

BIZET: *Carmen*; Ris Stevens (Carmen), Jan Peerce (Don José), Licia Albanese (Micaëla), Robert Merrill (Escamillo), Margaret Roggero (Mercédès), Paula Lenchner (Frasquita), Osie Hawkins (Zuniga), Hugh Thompson (Morales), Alessio De-Paulis (El Remendado), George Cehanovsky (El Dancaïro), Robert Shaw Chorale and Children's Chorus from l'Elysée Francaise, RCA Victor Orchestra conducted by Fritz Reiner. Victor LP set LM-6102, 3 discs, \$16.35 (also 45 rpm set).

▲ANOTHER French *Carmen* and an American one — they almost collided in the mails. The timing of both companies seems to have been well planned. Three *Carmens* in six months proves that rivalry is keen among the big record manufacturers. London's, like Columbia's (see May 1951 issue), was also accomplished with the forces of the Opéra-Comique in Paris, while Victor's boasts several leading artists from the Metropolitan. In the notes with the London set, we read that "the regular 'first' performers of the Opéra-Comique are featured in their respective roles." Be that as it may, after hearing all three leading ladies I find that it is Solange Michel's *Carmen* which is best remembered for its consistently smooth and beautiful singing. In my estimation, despite the fact that her portrayal is more restrained, she does not deserve a secondary rating. Suzanne Juyol's voice is rather colorless and much of her singing is tonally unsteady. But her *Carmen* is a vibrant and intense personality. More so than Miss Stevens', whose conception is rather obviously torrid, with too much stress on the power of the primitive emo-

tional struggle of Bizet's heroine. Much of her singing is velvety and warm-hued, but some of it is hard-driven. Stylistically, it is not in the great tradition. Of all *Carmens* represented on records (especially those electrically reproduced), the late Conchita Supervia was the most convincing in the scenes she made. It seems a pity that America's much admired other *Carmen* — Gladys Swarthout — was not given a similar opportunity to show her abilities in the whole opera, for what she did has the more refined musicality.

The Recitatives

In the Columbia set, the spoken recitatives are used as in the presentation of the opera in Paris. In the London set, and also in the Victor, the recitatives are sung, which has been the tradition in this country. Both of these new performances are excellently cast. The smaller parts are well sung in both cases and need not detain us. The leading roles are another matter. Of the two Don Josés, *Libero De Luca* has the younger, fresher voice. *Peerce* sings expressively but sounds somewhat mature for the young Corporal of Dragoons. Moreover, his singing is all of one color and one level of tone. *Janine Micheau* is a charming *Micaëla*; her singing is tonally ingratiating and effortless. *Licia Albanese's Micaëla* has its beauty of tone, but without sufficient shading. It is apparent that the role taxes her vocal resources at times. *Giovannetti* is a far better *Escamillo* than *Dens* in the Columbia set; his is a richly resonant voice. *Merrill*, who sang this part in the Victor "recordrama" featuring Swarthout, gives a finer performance here. There is more dramatic pith to his characterization, and his naturally beautiful voice is heard at its best. *Medus' Zuniga* has more stamina than *Hawkins'*. While the choral singing is excellent in both sets, the Shaw group deserves special commendation for its overall clarity of line.

The background of opera from the phonograph is of importance, and the new London set, like the Columbia one, is vivid with its stage effects. The general

sound of the London set is brighter than the Victor, but both are excellent examples of the work of modern recording engineers. It is a matter of acoustic resonance obtained from the place of recording. The orchestral quality in the London is lighter, often more transparent in sound than that employed in the Victor — the latter is more resonantly rich in sound. The veteran conductor, *Albert Wolff*, lets the drama speak for itself and never over-emphasizes it in the orchestral forces. His direction is consistently buoyant and rhythmically never overaccentuated. *Reiner*, whose musical direction is admirable for its detailed perfection, often gives unneeded emphasis to the drama and quickens the tempi on occasion.

Correct style and diction prevail in the two French sets, which is a definite point in their favor. But the opera *Carmen* does not live alone on this — and most American listeners are not swayed by it. As an American production of today, Victor's set is of a high order. —P.H.R.

WAGNER: *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (Opera in 3 Acts); **Ferdinand Franz** (Hans Sachs), **Kurt Böhme** (Veit Pogner), **Johannes Kemter** (Kunz Vogelsang), **Kurt Legner** (Konrad Nachtigall), **Heinrich Pflanzl** (Sixtus Beckmesser), **Karl Paul** (Fritz Kothner), **Karl-Heinz Thomann** (Balthaser Zorn), **Heinrich Tessmer** (Ulrich Eisslinger), **Gerhard Stolze** (Augustus Moser), **Theo Adam** (Herman Ortel), **Erich Handel** (Hans Schwartz), **Werner Faulhaber** (Hans Foltz), **Bernd Aldenhoff** (Walther von Stolz), **Gerhard Unger** (David), **Tiana Lemnitz** (Eva), **Emilie Walthers-Sacks** (Magdalena), **Werner Faulhaber** (Night Watchman), **Chorus of the Dresden State Opera**, **Saxon State Orchestra** conducted by **Rudolf Kempe**. Urania LP set URLP-206, six discs, \$35.70.

▲IT IS gratifying to have a complete performance of this extraordinary score, which some regard the best that Wagner wrote. Such an achievement should have

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RECORDS

THE GYPSY BARON

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Chorus and Orchestra of the Opéra-Comique, Paris
Conductor: Albert Wolff

MANON

(Jules Massenet)

Janine Micheau; Libero de Luca; Roger Bourdin
Chorus and Orchestra of the Opéra-Comique, Paris
Conductor: Albert Wolff

LA BOHEME

(Giuseppe Puccini)

Renata Tebaldi; Hilde Gueden; Giacinto Prandelli
Chorus and Orchestra of Santa Cecilia, Rome (Augusteo)
Conductor: Alberto Erede

MADAMA BUTTERFLY

(Giuseppe Puccini)

Renata Tebaldi; Giacinto Prandelli; Nell Tangeman
Chorus and Orchestra of Santa Cecilia, Rome (Augusteo)
Conductor: Alberto Erede

PARSIFAL

(Richard Wagner)

Bayreuth Festival Production, 1951
Conductor: Hans Knappertsbusch

DIE MIESTERSINGER—Acts 1 & 3

(Richard Wagner)

Same cast as in Act 2 (already issued—LLP 284/5)

PELLEAS ET MELISANDE

(Claude Debussy)

Suzanne Danco; Gerard Souzay
L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande
Conductor: Ernest Ansermet

been realized by one of the big companies years ago. Perhaps if the war had not intervened Victor would have followed up its pre-war, made in Germany, set of the third act with others from the same source. But, because of the war, we had to content ourselves with that offering until London issued last January its splendid recording of the second act. In the near future, London promises releases of the other two acts which were recorded at Bayreuth in recent months.

Realistic Recording

But here — at hand — we have a complete performance which is deserving of serious consideration. It is a far more successful venture than its sponsor's previous performance of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, both from technical and artistic aspects. As a recording, it has plenty of essential liveness, but while the overall balance is better than in the *Tristan* set, the orchestra does not have actuality comparable to the singer, who on some occasions are almost too realistic. Moreover, the dynamic range favors general loudness; soft passages seem to have been lifted and loud passages toned down. To claim that this is a result of injudicious monitoring on the part of an engineer would be an assumption, for in big setups like this for the phonograph often the controls are set to obtain the best overall balance without resorting to extensive monitoring. In the very loud climaxes, distortion may be evident from some equipment, but a well balanced, extended range outfit should be able to handle such passages.

As a performance this is particularly gratifying on the masculine side, with the exception of the casting of Walther. All the Mastersingers are satisfactorily cast, and so too is David, who is excellent. Ferdinand Franz — the Sachs — has a large voice which he uses skilfully. His is a noble characterization of the famous cobbler of Nuremberg, lacking only in the compassionate qualities of Schorr. But the expansiveness of his artistry suggests the true generosity of the kindly Sachs. Böhme, heard elsewhere in Urania sets in

comic roles, proves a fine Pogner, singing with expressive dignity. Lemnitz, as Eva, is uneven — some of the music imposes taxation on her vocal resources which results in tonal hardness. Yet, on the whole, her knowing artistry stands her in good stead and her portrayal is generally sympathetic and appealing. The Magdalena of Emilie Walther-Sacks is sung with artistic assurance, and Pflanzl's Beckmesser is excellent. Aldenhoff is almost intolerable as the youthful Knight who wins the contest and Eva. Almost consistently he sings under-pitch and with all too obvious effort. He is not on a par with the average German tenor who, while not being the most appealing type of singer, is at least usually credible in his characterization. But, after all, a performance of *Die Meistersinger* is not judged on the merits of this character — it is Hans Sachs and Eva that carry the burden of the opera. While Lemnitz is not comparable to Hilda Guedin in the London second act recording, she is a preferred artist to Teschemacher in the Victor third act set. And Franz with his wonderfully sonorous voice is in his way as appreciable as Paul Schoeffler in his. The choral singing is excellent throughout.

Kempe's orchestral direction is most competent — he has a firm, confident beat, and — as in Urania's *Freischütz* — he proves himself a dominating personality for the overall good of the performance.

—P.H.R.

GERSHWIN: *Porgy and Bess*; Lawrence Winters (Porgy), Camilla Williams (Bess), Inez Matthews (Serena), Avon Long (Sporting Life), Warren Coleman (Crown), and others with chorus and orchestra conducted by Lehman Engel. Columbia set SL-162, 3 LP discs, \$16.35.

▲**PORGY AND BESS** has certainly been one of the most influential theatre works of the past quarter century. Playing these three discs, which constitute the first really complete recorded presentation of Gershwin's opera, one notices almost from one number to the next the vast amount of

(Continued on page 64)

Record Notes and Reviews



THERE IS IN SOULS a sympathy with sounds, and as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased with melting airs or martial, brisk or grave; some chord in unison with what we hear is touched within us, and the heart replies.

—William Cowper

Orchestra

BRAHMS: *Serenade No. 1 in D major, Op. 11*; Bamberg Symphony Orchestra conducted by Robert Heger. Mercury LP disc MG 10076, \$4.85.

▲IN 1858, while teaching piano to the Princess Frederick, Brahms found time to study the symphonies of Haydn and the divertimenti of Mozart. The following year he wrote his delightfully rustic *D major Serenade* which shows the influence of both. Brahms' first success, it remains a work of lesser stature but greater charm than some of his more familiar orchestral work. In fact, Wilhelm Altmann once said: "It is my opinion that this charming fanciful work might be heard more frequently in the concert room. Perhaps in place of some of the master's symphonies."

Swoboda made a recording of the work not so long ago (Concert Hall LP 1807) but I give the palm to Heger, first because he is considerably more exuberant, second, because he takes the slower movement for what it is — a lyric song. In addition, the recording is well above Mercury's usual standards. It is very alive and preserves fine orchestral balance. —D.R.

BRAHMS: *Variations on a Theme by Haydn, Op. 56a*; Württemberg State Orchestra conducted by Ferdinand Leitner; **FRANCK:** *Symphonic Variations*; Géza Anda (piano), Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra conducted by Eduard van Beinum. Decca LP DL-9542, \$5.95.

▲BRAHMS and Franck are not the most ideal companions, and for my money Franck wins out with the better performance. The Hungarian-born Anda is an artist of sensitive attainments. His performance of Franck's poetic yet brilliant *Symphonic Variations* has beauty of tone, restraint of sentiment and a self-effacing technical assurance. The balance between piano and orchestra is excellent, which is probably due as much to van Beinum's fine conducting as it is to any engineering. But the latter has obviously been handled by a knowing person.

Leitner's Brahms is on the tame side, lacking in rhythmic accentuation, but the performance is generally clean and clear. This recording, like the Franck, an accomplishment of Deutsche Grammophon engineers, is praiseworthy for quality and balance. —J.N.

7 **DEBUSSY:** *Nocturnes — Nuages, Fêtes, Sirènes; Prelude — L'après-midi d'un faune; Clair de lune*; Leopold Stokow-

ski and his Symphony Orchestra with Robert Shaw Chorale of Women's Voices. RCA Victor LP LM-1154, \$5.45.

▲THERE are two schools of thought on performing Debussy's music — those who contend his rhythm is vague and non-accentual, and those who contend his rhythm can be definitely marked. Stokowski, who freely makes use of *rubati* in his metrical scansion of most of Debussy's music, has provoked considerable critical comment through the years. More than any other conductor, Stokowski exploits the sensuousness of the composer's music, and the sounds he evokes in these works — for which he has shown a special predilection through the years — are extraordinary for their color effects and play of light and shadow. These new recordings are far ahead of any others the conductor has done for their tonal beauties. Modern engineering achieves greater wonders in sound modulation than before, and for sheer poetic beauty and luminosity of tone this recording is in a class by itself.

—P.H.R.

LISZT: Hunnen Schlacht; Munich Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by **Kurt Eichhorn; Tasso, Lamento e Trionfo;** Same orchestra conducted by **Adolf Mennerich.** Mercury LP disc MG 10083, \$4.85.

▲THESE TWO "symphonic poems," numbers 11 and 2 respectively, are both based upon historical programs dear to the composer. *The Battle of the Huns* is one of his most successful ventures as for once the program is colorful enough to support the weight of the music. Based on a mural by Kaulbach depicting the heavenly combat between the Christians of Theodoric and the hordes of Attila, the work contains a splendid, almost Berlioz battle-scene which is so interesting that one wishes Liszt had allowed Attila to win. The triumph of Christianity is pallid by comparison. Eichhorn conducts with a commendable vigor and is partially responsible for the excitement generated

by the work. *Tasso* has always been, for me, one of the duller pieces of music ever written. *The Triumph* seems less tedious than the *Lamento*, only by comparison. To the music is attached an endless program which explains that laments and triumphs "are the opposite poles of the destiny of poets, of whom it has been justly said that if their lives are often burdened by a curse, a blessing is never wanting over their grave." This must indeed be true for it partially explains the many performances and, now, this recording of *Tasso*. Mennerich conducts the work for the example of academic architecture that it is. In both pieces the Munich Orchestra plays soundly but with little finesse. The recording lacks any great depth but captures all of the notes.

—D.R.

★**MARTINU: Serenade and Partita for String Orchestra; Winterthur Symphony Orchestra; Concerto for String Quartet and Orchestra; Vienna Konzerthaus Quartet and the Vienna State Opera Orchestra.** Both conducted by **Henry Swoboda.** Westminster LP disc WL-5024, \$5.95.

▲MARTINU is one of the most talented composers of the past quarter century. Czech by birth, he has often been called (in spite of his predominantly French training and his current American residence) the successor to Smetana. No mean compliment that.

He has often lived up to the title, too. At his best, Martinu writes with a rhythmic alacrity and an irresistible brio. There is sunshine, singing, and dancing in his music. Some of those valuable elements are present in his neo-classical *Serenade*, written in 1931 and dedicated to his one-time mentor Albert Roussel. There are a few in the *Partita for String Orchestra*, which is taken from Martinu's *First Suite*. Both of these works use the classical four-movement sonata-form structure to present the vigorous, almost folk-like expression that is indicated through polka and mazurka-like rhythms.

If neither of the above works has the significance of Martinu's matchless best

(e.g. *Concerto grosso for two pianos and orchestra*, the *Fourth* or *Fifth Symphonies*), they bear acquaintance and should wear rather well. This is not entirely true of the *Concerto for String Quartet and Orchestra*. This work, made of two rondos sandwiched around a highly chromatic adagio that almost recalls at times the Viennese 12-tone composers, always seems to just miss making its points. As I have indicated, the piece is eclectic and not typical of Martinu's most personal work. And Martinu is at his very best when he gives of himself.

Swoboda's conducting in all of these works has plentiful energy and enthusiasm that is communicated to his satisfactory executants. The recording is what we have come to expect from Westminster; it's in every way first rate. —C.J.L.

MOZART: *Serenade No. 11 in E flat*, K.375 and *Serenade No. 12 in C minor*, K.388; **The Kell Chamber Players** conducted by **Reginald Kell**. Decca LP disc DL9540, \$5.85.

▲THIS IS the disc debut for the Kell Chamber Players and for the serious conducting talents of the noted clarinetist, Reginald Kell. It would be more of a happy occasion if the memory of the wonderful performance by the wind group of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra of this music (Westminster LP disc WL5021) were not so fresh. What the European group did with these moving and entertaining pieces is pretty far removed from the coldly efficient playing of the Kell Players. And I am also somewhat put out with the recurring downbeat that is present in the American performance.

The recording here is clear and bright, but really no better than the Westminster job. Better take the Westminster, then, on all points. —C.J.L.

MOZART: *Symphony in G major*, K.199; *Symphony in D major*, K.202; **Bamberg Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **L. G. Jochum**. L'Oiseau-Lyre LP disc OLLD-6, \$5.95.

▲THESE symphonies date from Mozart's seventeenth and eighteenth years. The *G major* is in the style of an Italian sinfonia, while the *D major* has four distinct movements and — despite its *galant* style — is classical in construction. Of the two, the *D major* is the more vigorous work and owns a fine slow movement which Einstein contends could have been well used in one of the Vienna quartets in the style of Haydn. This latter symphony is new to records and should prove a welcome addition to the Mozart symphonic literature on records. The *G major* was previously recorded by Westminster, but the present performance is preferable for its greater grace and fluency. Both performances have essential brightness and clarity of texture. The recording lacks room resonance but the chamber orchestral qualities of these works is well enough served by the reproduction. —P.H.R.

2 **PERGOLESI:** *Concertinos No. 1 in G*, No. 3 in A, No. 4 in F minor, No. 5 in E flat; **Winterthur Symphony Orchestra** conducted by Angelo Ephrikian. Westminster, 2 10" LP discs, WL 4001/2, \$9.90.

▲PERGOLESI, whose fame rests mainly on *La Serva Padrona* and his *Stabat Mater*, wrote a great many instrumental works. Whether or not the group of six concertini grossi, from which these four are drawn, are authentic seems irrelevant as they have definite characteristics of the composer's style. As Pergolesi was but twenty-six when he died, it has become common to assert that he would not have been so highly regarded had he lived longer. That, of course, is not to the point, for it is a fact that all his known works stand quite well by themselves. These four ingratiating little concertinos are no exception, indeed they make surprisingly fresh listening. One wonders what else lies hidden in archives awaiting such an interest as Westminster's and such admirable interpretations as Ephrikian's. His readings tend toward a simplicity which is inherent in the music. The only fault one might

find is that the strings of the Winterthur are not as smooth as they might be. The recording is well up to Westminster's usual excellence.

—D.R.

NORTH, Alex: *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Music from the Film); Unnamed orchestra conducted by **Ray Heindorf**. Capitol LP disc L289, \$3.98.

▲**ADMIRABLE** as this score is with the movie, it does not make very exciting listening by itself — perhaps for the very reason that it's good movie-music. In the film, the sound track, which is of the utmost importance, carries not only this music but also everyday sounds, snatches of dialogue, echos and unexplained noises. The present disc purports to be "from the original sound track" but it is not. It is actually a "concert" arrangement of the music into movements which have been given such quasi-abstract titles, so popular at the moment, as: *Lust, Soliloquy and Redemption*. The music, however, is pleasant enough to listen to, being relatively free from both the movie-cliché and the "big-production" effect of so many Hollywood film scores. The performance is first-rate and so is the recording.

—D.R.

RAVEL: *La Valse; Daphnis et Chloé, Suite II; I.N.R. Symphony Orchestra* conducted by **Franz André**. Capitol 10" LP disc L-8145, \$3.98.

▲**ANDRÉ'S** previous recordings have shown him expert with Ravel's scores. Of the many interpretations of *La Valse* his is one of the best. His reading is a far cry, to be sure, from that of Koussevitzky, Munch, Ansermet or Monteux. He is not concerned with the orchestral sound as such. There is no almost inaudible beginning and he does not mute the roaring brass at the conclusion. Throughout, he is mainly concerned with a clean delineation of this most athletic of scores, which is the opposite of the "impressionistic" intentions of many conductors. His main competition, therefore, is Reiner, who also prefers to treat the score as the waltz that it is. Of the two, perhaps Reiner wins, if

only because the Pittsburgh Orchestra is better than the Brussels and his recording is free from the boxed-in sound of a studio. Again, Reiner's recording is coupled with an enchanting reading of Debussy's *Iberia*, and André's is attached to a performance of *Daphnis* which, while it cannot be called routine, seems too undetailed to compare with the superlative reading of Charles Munch. The recording of both these works is good studio work and as lifelike as can be expected with limited resonance.

—D.R.

SCHUMAN: *Symphony No. 3; Philadelphia Orchestra* conducted by **Eugene Ormandy**. Columbia LP disc ML-4413, \$5.45.

▲**TO** the tiny roster of representative recordings of American symphonies is now added one of the most remarkable works in that form written in the past 20 years or so — William Schuman's *Third*. A vote of thanks is due the Walter W. Naumburg Foundation, which last year sponsored the recording of Roger Session's *Symphony No. 2*, for making the present recording possible also.

If you delight in thematic material that is new, yet stamped with a definite personality, in exciting rhythms, in a clean, healthy acerbity, in a power of invention that can spin an entire, richly stocked symphony out of a few basic intervals employed in its first theme, in a technical mastery that can bend old devices to fresh uses, in the virtuoso treatment of a large orchestra, then this symphony is for you. Schuman's style has changed somewhat since this work was written ten years ago, at the age of thirty-one. In his compositions of the last three or four years — the *Violin Concerto, Undertow, the Symphony No. 6, Judith, the String Quartet No. 4* — there is perhaps a greater emotional profundity, the harmonic procedures are different, and the material frequently takes on a more lyric shape, but the *Third Symphony* remains a high-water mark of youthful exuberance coupled with mature craftsmanship.

Not many orchestras in the world could play the work with the smoothness and zest that the great Philadelphians display here. Ormandy has obviously got under the skin of this difficult piece. He begins a shade slowly for the present reviewer's taste, and there are one or two other fly-specks; but the Fugue is played with the large sweep it requires, the Chorale has the tender gravity inherent in it, and the Toccata is done with stunning virtuosity, the passionate fire of the cadenzas for the strings being especially noteworthy. As a job of reproduction the recording is excellent.

—Nathan Broder

SCHUBERT: *Symphony in C major, Op. 140 (Gastein)* (trans. Joseph Joachim); **Vienna State Opera Orchestra** conducted by **Felix Prohaska**. Vanguard LP disc 417, \$5.95.

▲ THIS IS AN orchestral arrangement of the *Grand Duo* for piano duet, which Tovey contends is the lost "Gastein" symphony (see notes on envelope). While the effectiveness of the orchestration lends support, as one writer has said, "to the theory that Schubert intended the work as a symphony," there will always be some question on the validity of the undertaking. In the piano version, this work unquestionably suggests orchestral style, but pitting its separate movements in orchestral dress against the other symphonies of Schubert it does quite match them in interest. But, just as in the case of Weingartner's controversial arrangement for orchestra of Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" sonata, the idea in many ways seems a sound one. It gives valued coloration and greater breadth to a large canvas, which in neither case is ideally served by the piano. Perhaps the dignity of the opening movement is better substantiated in the four-hand piano arrangement, but surely the slow movement and the scherzo gain from instrumental coloring, while the finale loses nothing in the arrangement.

Prohaska's performance is alert and well paced — the recording has essential realism.

—P.H.R.

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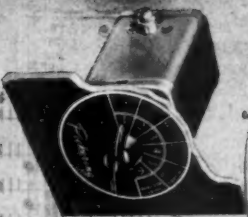


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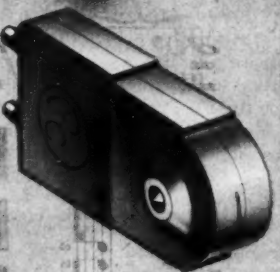


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STRAUSS: *Don Quixote, Op. 35; Bavarian State Orchestra* conducted by **Richard Strauss.** Decca LP D-9539, \$5.95.

▲THOUGH dated as a recording, this original Deutsche Grammophon release is nonetheless welcome as a souvenir of the late Richard Strauss' interpretative powers. He never over-dramatized his tone poems nor was he guilty of understatement. In his day, Strauss was recognized as a gifted conductor, and his performances of Beethoven and Mozart symphonies were among the most musical and elucidating of their time. It is a pity that his early recordings of several of these were reproductively so bad.

Even though a composer be a knowing interpreter, he is not always the foremost one of his own music. Strauss was far better than most, but others have given us more telling performances of his tone poems than he did. In the case of this work, Beecham has given the most definitive reading on records, and it is to be hoped that his performance will be made available on LP before long. However, this version by the composer definitely deserves to be issued, as indeed do all performances of his own works. RCA Victor should release the Strauss performance of his *Alpine Symphony*, which was made by the composer with the Bavarian State Orchestra about ten years ago. It is an amazingly realistic recording considering the tremendous orchestral forces involved. —P.H.R.

Concerto

HANDEL: *Six Concertos for Orchestra, Op. 3 and Alexanderfest Concerto; Vienna State Opera Orchestra* conducted by **Felix Prohaska.** Bach Guild LP set, 2 discs, \$11.70.

▲THESE CONCERTOS, best known in England and this country as the oboe concertos, are not to be confused with the famous twelve for string orchestra, *Op. 6*. In these, Handel in his *Concertino*—or solo

instruments — pits one or more oboes with violins against the main body of strings thus getting a greater variety of tonal coloring than in his *concerti grossi* of *Op. 6*. The listener of today, who often takes for granted that the music of past times follows a set pattern, might consider an important fact outlined by the annotator that these works represent "examples of progress in the *concerto grosso* form and illustrate Handel's ability to integrate archaic forms with innovations and technical advances of his time."

All of these works are among Handel's engaging orchestral compositions. The *Alexanderfest Concerto*, believed to have been incorporated as incidental music in the oratorio of the same name, is the longest with a deeply expressive slow movement and an imposing marchlike finale. Though it is doubtful that most listeners would care to hear the six concertos at one time, each has its individual merits and any one or two should prove entertaining. The performances are well planned and carried out in the fugal sections but elsewhere tend to become heavy-handed. The recording is excellent. —P.H.R.

GRIEG: *Piano Concerto in A minor, Op. 16; Walter Gieseking* (piano) and the **Philharmonic Orchestra** conducted by **Herbert von Karajan.** Columbia LP disc ML-4431, \$5.45.

▲AN IDEAL performance of this popular concerto displays its wistful lyricism and its delicate tincytrac — the two elements that make this work difficult to resist. When it gets the big, polished, over-emotional treatment, the work loses its shape and fails to make its points.

Gieseking and Karajan are both guilty of inflating Grieg's music with a pretentiousness that merely points up its weaknesses. To be sure, there is a measure of exquisite playing here and there; after all, Gieseking is performing. But much of it is not what is called for here. Though this recording is handsome, for a more worthwhile all-round job Columbia should have issued the Lipatti performance. On LP, the Schioler (Mercury MG-15012) is, in my estimation, preferable. —C.J.L.

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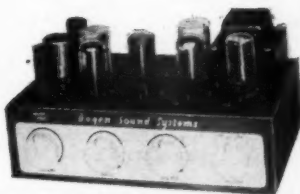
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SAINT-SAENS: *Cello Concerto in A minor*; **BLOCH:** *Schelomo*; **Leonard Rose** (cello) with **Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of N.Y.** conducted by **Dimitri Mitropoulos**. Columbia LP disc ML-4425. \$5.45.

▲ **HERE** are a couple of handsome performances. Leonard Rose is a fine musician who can elicit sumptuous, dark sounds from his cello. His equipment is perfect for Bloch's loose, overlong, but powerful rhapsody; just shy of perfect for Saint-Saëns' opus which is all style and often requires a lighter touch than Rose supplies.

Mitropoulos is in fine form in both works, but particularly effective in his handling of *Schelomo*. Such is his and Rose's work that their performance might have been the best on records. Unfortunately, Columbia's engineers have made that impossible by severely monitoring the majestic orchestral climaxes that one remembers from Mitropoulos' performance of this music in the concert hall. The Nelsova-Bloch version (London LPS-138) is, therefore preferred. —C.J.L.

SCHUMANN: *Concerto in A minor, Op. 54*; **Dinu Lipatti** (piano), the **Philharmonia Orchestra** conducted by **Herbert von Karajan**. Columbia 10" LP disc ML-2195, \$4.00.

▲ **THIS** is the first recording to be issued in this country of the late Lipatti, whose searching artistry is rare in this day and age. Had I been given a choice for a first release of the several large works he made for the phonograph, I would have urged his extraordinarily beautiful rendition of the Grieg concerto, which I regard as the best ever achieved of this work on records. The English critics seem to have been divided in their opinions of Lipatti's Schumann. It is true that he and the conductor treat the work in a virtuoso style, but there are many niceties and incidental beauties in the performance which eschew the rather obvious romantic sentiment found in the Rubinstein version.

The recording was badly criticized in England — the piano tone was called "shallow and harsh." I presume if the

English heard the present LP version, loud cries against it would be forthcoming. But, in my estimation, it is far better than the original 78 rpm one and without any shallowness or harshness in the piano tone; indeed, the over-all balance has a fullness and mellowness that please my ear. Lipatti's "virtuosity" is well schooled, not a dominating force that prevents acknowledgment of the more delicate beauties of the music. It is von Karajan, in my estimation, that drives the music rather hard on occasion and exploits its virtuoso characteristics. It is he who refutes the *affectuoso* marking of the opening movement rather than Lipatti. Perhaps tradition is challenged, but fine musicianship cannot be denied. In issuing this performance, Columbia has definitely pushed the Serkin-Ormandy one into the background, a place from which all listeners may not wish it to emerge.

—P.H.R.

Instrumental

CHAUSSON: *Poème, Op. 25*; **SAINT-SAENS:** *Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso, Op. 28*; **Zino Francescatti** (violin) and the **Philadelphia Orchestra** conducted by **Eugene Ormandy**. Columbia 10" LP disc, \$4.00.

▲ **CHAUSSON'S** romantic *Poème* has a songful beauty and inspiration that endears it to the hearts of listeners. This latest performance is by far the best issued on records. Francescatti's sensitive and tonally expressive playing is backed by the warm-hued sound of the Philadelphia Orchestra. The fine recording has a wider dynamic range and balance than any that has preceded it.

One could have wished for a different companion to the Chausson — but the name of a suitable one evades me at the moment. However, Saint-Saëns' hard-worked virtuoso piece affords contrast. Francescatti's performance, with its rare lyrical musicality, dims memories of the famous Heifetz one and, also, as it is better recorded, takes first place. —J.N.

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Chamber Music

BRAHMS: *Quartet No. 2 in A major for Piano and Strings, Op. 26; Albeneri Trio with Raphael Hillyer (viola).* Mercury LP disc MG 10090, \$4.85.

▲THE YOUTHFUL and pleasant early piano quartets of Brahms demand a curious combination in the ensemble: a willingness to luxuriate just as much as the music does and a rigid feeling for the structure of the score which Brahms himself seems at times to have neglected. For this reason, the fine performance by Serkin and the Busch string group (Victor M346 withdrawn) proves the most satisfactory. The present performance errs in a neglect of the underlining and reinforcing which are needed to make this very romantic quartet something other than a piece of lush lyricism. The recording is fairly realistic, and the balance is such that all instruments are equally audible. —D.R.

✓**HINDEMITH:** *Quartet No. 3, Op. 22; PROKOFIEFF: Quartet No. 2, Op. 92; The Hollywood String Quartet.* Capitol LP disc P8151, \$4.85.

▲HINDEMITH'S third quartet dates from 1922. The 1920s were a period of experiment with many composers. The lack of key indication in this work and the fact that it is terse and reflective of its time might lead some to regard it as experimental. However, examination of the score shows the scope of the composer's imagination and the ingenuity of his counterpoint. This is a work with a strong profile which softens only in the slow movement. It was recorded some years back by the Coolidge String Quartet, a group that lacked the breadth of tone and strength of purpose that the present players have.

The Prokofieff quartet is more accessible, being based on Kabardinian and Balkarian folk tunes from the Caucasus, which allow for rhythmic and lyrical contrasts. There has been some unjust criticism of this work because of its folk elements and

rather obvious appeal. The worth of the work, however, lies in what the composer has done with his material rather than in its intrinsic value. The annotator says that "this is hardly a personal document in the sense of the classical and romantic string quartet, but rather a study in various exotic moods." To be sure, but the unmistakable individuality of its gifted composer is marked on every page — the strong harmonies of the opening movement, the piquant handling of poetic sentiment of the second, and the rhapsodic finale with its syncopated rhythms. The present performance of this opus is quite as admirable as the Hindemith but lacking in some of the tonal warmth of the Gordon String Quartet version (Concert Hall CHC-8). The recording has a healthy liveliness of tone and good balance, but there is a wiry string quality on the high end on occasion. —P.H.R.

HINDEMITH: *Sonata for Flute and Piano; Sonatina for Two Flutes; Sonata for Bassoon and Piano; Julius Baker and Harold Bennett (flutes), Leonard Sharrow (bassoon) and Juliette Arnold (piano).* Oxford LP disc. OR 103. \$5.95.

▲IN 1936 Paul Hindemith began composing sonatas for the various instruments of the symphony orchestra in an effort to remedy the unfortunate condition that, there being no solo literature for many, they are becoming obsolete as solo instruments in our time. As one of the chief composers of *gebrauchsmusik* (music for everyday use) he had already written for a number of unusual instrumental combinations — including the delightful *Canonoe Sonatina for Two Flutes*, here recorded, a part of his *Op. 31* (1922). Using traditional sonata form, he began composing in 1936 concert works for every one of the major instruments. Among the earliest of these works is the three movement flute sonata, which was followed two years later by the bassoon sonata. Both are extremely well devised music, particularly the latter which contains one of the finest

slow movements that the composer has written. All are first recordings except the flute sonata which has recently appeared in both the Kincaid (Col. ML 54339) and the Rampal (Mer. MG 10067) collections. This performance by Julius Baker is preferred by me. It contains the limpid tonal quality the former performance lacks and the precise articulation missing from the Rampal. The other performers are equally appreciable, in my estimation almost as good as the music. The recording is admirably realistic.

—D.R.

PISTON: *Sonata for Violin and Piano*. **LOPATNIKOFF:** *Sonata No. 2, Op. 32*; **Joseph Fuchs** (violin) and **Artur Balsam** (piano). Decca LP disc DL-9541, \$5.85.

▲**JOSEPH FUCHS**, one of the world's half-dozen great fiddlers, here presents two neo-classical works of uncommon worth. Both are in three movements, both are brilliant and quite difficult to play. Both use accepted formal structures and make their expressive points in various terms of musical speech.

Piston's Sonata is graceful of line, full of contrapuntal interest, lean of sound, and rhythmically ever-so-varied. Lopatnikoff's work is laid out along similar lines except that the slow movement contains elements of sustained and powerful song.

Fuchs and Balsam perform these works with assured technical powers and impeccable taste. Decca's recording is clear, but it lacks sufficient resonance. —C.J.L.

~ **VILLA-LOBOS:** *Sonata for Violin and Piano, No. 3*; **DEBUSSY:** *Sonata for Violin and Piano*; **Ricardo Odnoposoff** (violin) and **Leonid Hambro** (piano). Allegro LP disc ALG 3025, \$5.95.

▲**THE THIRD SONATA**, as yet unpublished, of the prolific Villa-Lobos was written in 1951. It is a tuneful and comparatively conservative work, well devised for both the violin and the piano. In three contrasted movements, it betrays nothing of Brazilian origin and throws some new light on the composer as other

than a musical nationalist. The violinist, a native of Buenos Aires, plays the work with an admirable verve and spirit which Hambro, often the perfect sonata partner, duplicates. They are here more successful in ensemble than they are in the Debussy. Popular as the latter work is, it needs real technicians who understand the milieu in which the work must be accepted — artists like Francescatti and Casadesu who give the finer performance (Columbia ML 4178). There is a slight tendency in this recording to overemphasize the violin, otherwise it is quite acceptable. —D.R.

VITALI (trans. Respighi): *Chaconne*; **Jascha Heifetz** (violin) and **Richard Ellsasser** (organ). RCA Victor 45 rpm disc 49-3305, \$1.10

▲**VITALI'S** classic *Chaconne*, originally for violin and continuo, is known to almost every student of the violin. In the composer's time (late 17th century), the continuo part was probably realized on both the clavier and the organ. In modern times, there have been many arrangements of this fine work, but surely none more luxurious and sumptuous in sound than this. It proves a very effective vehicle for Heifetz's particular kind of talent. The entrance of the violin is rather electrifying and thereafter it holds the center of attraction. Mr. Ellsasser is the discreet accompanist as generally happens with Heifetz. The recording is good of its kind.

—J.N.

Keyboard

~ **BARTOK:** Excerpts from *Mikrokosmos*; **Bela Bartok** (piano). Columbia LP disc ML-4419, \$5.45.

▲**COLUMBIA** is due our thanks for giving us Bartok's own masterful playing of some of his ever fascinating *Mikrokosmos* pieces. *Mikrokosmos*, composed over an eleven year period (1926-1937), is a set of 153 short pieces for the piano student which begins with comparatively

easy numbers and continues with those for more advanced pupils. As an academic study for pianists, as a "textbook on the technical principles of contemporary music," as absorbing music written in a unique and masterful idiom, *Mikrokosmos* is in every way first class.

Columbia's engineers have done a respectable job of dubbing from the original 78 discs. As in the originals, the piano tone is clear but lacks resonance and the frequency range is definitely limited. The surfaces, however, are amazingly quiet.

—C.J.L.

BACH: *Canonic Variations* on "Von Himmel hoch da Komm' ich hier"; *Chorale and Variations* on "O Gott, du frommer Gott"; **Robert Noehren** (organ). *Allegro* LP disc AL 116, \$5.45.

▲**NOEHREN** is certainly the most outstanding young organist now recording. His previous Bach and Buxtehude demanded and received serious attention. This disc should insure his reputation even further. The *Canonic Variations*, written during the last years of Bach's life, deserve a place only slightly below the *Musical Offering* and the *Art of the Fugue*. Of them Schweitzer has said, "Bach's . . . purpose was to pack into a single chorale the whole art of canon . . . they are full of Christmas joyousness and cheeriness." The *Chorale and Variations* were written when the composer was only seventeen and are correspondingly slighter, but no less beautiful. Noehren performs both with a true authority. There may yet be some question as to his capability in handling the more massive work of Bach but, in works such as these, he has almost no competition. The organ, in the Grace Church of Sandusky, Ohio, on which he does most of his recording, is an unusually fine instrument and the *Allegro* engineers have captured it with fidelity. In addition, the jacket notes contain invaluable information on the registration used in the performance.

—D.R.

BACH: *Music of Jubilee*; **E. Power Biggs** (organ) and the **Columbia Chamber Orchestra** conducted by **Richard Burgin**. Columbia LP disc ML 4435, \$5.45.

▲THIS collection of excerpts from "some of the composer's best-loved" works is held together by a note on the jacket explaining that "with noble phrases Bach extols the Festivals of Thanksgiving, of Christmas, the drama of Palm Sunday, the jubilation of Easter, and the miracle of Spring." The result is a procession of isolated cantata movements from Nos. 29, 47, 79, 129, 142, 146, 182 and 208 and chorale-preludes, quite pleasant but somewhat meaningless in their mutual context. E. Power Biggs plays very accurately and very swiftly but without sufficient personal convictions to satisfy fully. The recording is quite fine.

—D.R.

BRAHMS: *Fantasias, Op. 116; Intermezzi, Op. 117; Magda Rusy* (piano). Mercury LP disc MG 10074, \$4.85.

▲THE ATTRACTION of this disc is that both *Op. 116* and *Op. 117* are complete, the former for the first time. This music is of such personal and introspective nature that one single interpretation can scarcely be called authoritative; there is always room for more. It is thus conceivable that a consistent performance could be appropriate. Miss Rusy's interpretations, however, though consistent enough and with moments of nice lyricism, all too often create an ambiguity by her failure to realize the subtlety of the cross-rhythms, and a dryness occasioned by an evident reluctance to use the pedal; nor is there enough rhythmic conception to keep the music from sounding static. This may well be a matter of opinion, but the Wilhelm Kempff recording (London LPS 205) of the *Op. 117* — if not the best Brahms playing — is preferable. The recording is faulty. The sonorities needed in this music are not captured, and it is often impossible to gauge the pianist's precise dynamics.

—D.R.

BACH: *Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor*; *Pastorale in F major*; **Ernest White** (organ). Mercury LP disc MG 15032. \$3.85.

▲**MR. WHITE** will be remembered as the artist who recently recorded the Brahms *Chorale-Preludes for Organ* (Mercury LP MG 10070) in which work he was so well-versed as to give an excellent performance. His Bach is another matter. His interpretation of the *Passacaglia* cannot compare in power, at any rate, with the Heitman recording (Capital L 8105). Its delicacy is fine for the charming four-movement *Pastorale*, but not for the tremendous architecture of the *Passacaglia and Fugue*. Part of this impression of general structural weakness may be due to his instrument — the organ of New York's Church of Saint Mary the Virgin — which is built on French classic lines, or it may be due to the position of the instrument; it is bracketed high on the wall, around the West Rose window. Whatever it is, I don't think it is the recording, for the reverberation of held notes is fine. The disc is worth acquiring only for the lovely *Pastorale*. —D.R.

BRAHMS: *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel*; *Intermezzo in B flat, Op. 117, No. 1*; *Intermezzo in C sharp minor, Op. 117, No. 3*; **Lubka Kolessa** (piano). Concert Hall Society LP disc 1108, \$5.95.

SCHUMANN: *Symphonic Etudes*; *Tocata in C*; **Lubka Kolessa** (piano). Concert Hall Society LP disc 1111, \$5.95.

▲**THIS** is the first recorded version of the Schumann *Symphonic Etudes* that contains a sampling of some of the variations that Schumann composed but (wisely) did not include in the first published edition. The work is long enough as it is, and Schumann dropped the least inspired sections. Miss Kolessa's playing emphasizes the length of the work by her determination to take virtually every repeat — not the wisest procedure for a pianist much under the stature of a Hofmann or Gabrilowitsch.

Miss Kolessa is no Hofmann. On the credit side she does have a romantic temperament and hence a flair for music by Schumann and Brahms. She also is no mean technician (though scarcely an infallible one). But her dynamics stress the loud side, she insists on piling up ugly sonorities, and her tone has an unpleasant edge to it. There are nicely calculated moments to her playing, but, unfortunately, a little goes a long way. If she could tame her exuberant temperament and begin to wonder about the possibilities of the piano for delicacy and color, she could be a pianist of real potentiality. —H.C.S.

CLEMENTI: *Rondo from Sonata in B flat, Op. 47, No. 2*; **SCRIABIN:** *Etude in C sharp minor, Op. 2, No. 1*; **Vladimir Horowitz** (piano). RCA Victor 45 rpm disc 49-3303, \$1.10.

▲**CONTRASTING** styles and moods are represented here. The delightful rondo by Clementi has a Scarlatti-like eagerness and playfulness. The Scriabin étude, one of his early works, may owe much to Chopin but in mood it suggests Tchaikovsky. Horowitz plays both selections expressively with artistic reserve. Excellent recording. —J.N.

INFANTE: *Quadalquivir*; **FAURE:** *Impromptu No. 3 in A flat, Op. 34*; **Amparo Iturbi** (piano). RCA Victor 45 rpm disc 49-3309, \$1.10.

▲**MISS ITURBI'S** artistry is far less spectacular than her brother's, it is feminine and elegant. Her fluent performance of Infante's tribute to one of Spain's famous rivers hardly suggests the difficulties of the music. This is a colorful piece, with Spanish rhythms and harmonies, that varies in mood. Cortot claims that Fauré's *Third Impromptu* is one of his most individual — the perfect model of what such a piece should be. Miss Iturbi plays it smoothly and easily without undue *rubati*, as the composer intended, but the realistic recording does not suggest that she senses all its subtle shadings. —J.N.

MOZART: *Rondo in A minor; Suite in the Style of Handel; Gigue, K.574; Sonata in F, K.533 & 494; Charles Rosen* (piano). R.E.B. Editions LP disc 5, \$5.95. *Sonata in C, K.279; Sonata in F, K.280; Florencia Raizen*. R.E.B. LP disc 4, \$5.95.

▲Rosen, a newcomer to discs, plays his assortment in a bright, intelligent, healthy manner. There is a lot of individuality to his approach, which would be even better if he used less pedal and if he sometimes clarified his metrical groupings a little more. As it is, however, he has contributed some really good playing, and by virtue of the fine music, none available on LP except the *Rondo in A minor*, the disc is a valuable addition to recorded Mozartiana.

Miss Raitzin has the less pleasant task of bringing to life the first two of Mozart's keyboard sonatas. They are fairly unimportant works, youthful and occasionally spirited, but not too interesting. The pianist gives them a neat, skillful performance. Here, as in Mr. Rosen's disc, the playing is aided by especially clear and lifelike reproduction. —H.C.S.

RAVEL: *Le Tombeau de Couperin; Gaspar de la Nuit; Bernhard Weiser* (piano). R.E.B. Editions LP disc 5, \$5.95.

▲TWO of Ravel's best piano pieces are here rather indifferently played by Weiser. There's a lot of covering-up in his playing. Superficially it sounds as though he has the notes in his fingers, but a glance at the score while he is going along confirms the impression that his technique is not really of an order that will let him handle *Scarbo*, say, with absolute command. A feeling of strain is evident, and the outstanding impression is that a boy has been sent to do a man's job. —H.C.S.

SCHUMANN: *Kreisleriana* (Op. 16); *Novelette No. 8 in F sharp minor; Ray Lev* (piano). Concert Hall Society LP disc CHS-1102, \$5.95.

▲SCHUMANN'S *Kreisleriana* is one of the more difficult pieces in the repertoire. Not only is it technically difficult, but it demands a rare degree of integration in the player. Pianists who don't "see" it from the beginning to end are apt to find it disintegrating under their fingers, especially since the composer himself miscalculated in some of the slow sections, which have a tendency to drag on. It cannot be said that Miss Lev has succeeded in solving the structural problems here. Her reading is pretty grim — muscular, impetuous, fairly exact technically but certainly nothing to challenge the old Cortot set, which still remains the phonographic standard. Arrau's set for Columbia, a few years back, I thought bleak and frigid. Miss Lev's performance of the *Novelette* is built along the same lines as her ideas about the *Kreisleriana*, with determination and a forward percussive drive replacing grace and poetry.

The recording has a general clanging quality and some "tinny" overtones.

—H.C.S.

Voice

BRAHMS: *Alto Rhapsody, Op. 53; Marian Anderson* (contralto) with the **Robert Shaw Chorale of Men's Voices**, the **RCA Victor Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Fritz Reiner**. RCA Victor 45 rpm set, 2 discs, \$2.40.

▲THIS is the third recording of Brahms' *Alto Rhapsody* by Miss Anderson. It was observed when she recorded the work in 1946 with Monteux and the San Francisco Symphony that she did not share the rhythmic mastery of the conductor and that her longer phrases lacked a sufficient reserve of breath. These faults are less apparent in this performance, but for all the beauty of her singing Miss Anderson's tones are not consistently steady and she does not quite achieve the memorable climax that she did in 1946. Mr. Reiner's orchestral direction is completely competent, though it has not Monteux's freedom

of movement which seemed so fitting to this music.

Brahms wrote the work, we are told, in a period of dejection, yet the *Rhapsody* took on a more devotional than despondent character. This devotional character asks for varying coloration from the voice to keep the music from being unduly doleful, something Miss Anderson does not do as did Kathleen Ferrier, whose singing of this work on London records was less subdued. There is nothing but praise to give for the fine balance and clarity of this recording, and those who like the work and admire the artist are urged to hear it.

—J.N.

CANTELOUBE: *Songs of the Auvergne*; **FRENCH OPERATIC ARIAS:** *Printemps qui commence, Amour! Viens aider ma faiblesse, Mon cœur s'ouvre à la voix* from *Samson and Delilah* (Saint-Saëns); *Letter Scene* from *Werther* (Massenet); *Tu n'es pas beau* from *La Perichole* (Offenbach); Gladys Swarthout (mezzo-soprano) with RCA Victor Orchestra conducted by Jean Paul Morel. RCA Victor LP disc LM-1156, \$5.72.

▲THOUGH Madeleine Grey said long ago just about the last word on Canteloube's arrangements of the delightful *Songs of the Auvergne*, it is not the least unpleasant to encounter such a performance as Swarthout gives here. Opulent of sound, simple and straightforward of delivery, Swarthout's singing is particularly effective in the working songs of the field laborers, teamsmen, shepherds. It is less suited to the intimate *Breàirola*, the touching lullaby, or the dance songs. Morel's accompaniments are superb. So is the recording; it is invigorating for once to hear a faithful account of Canteloube's pungent orchestration.

The previously released *Letter Scene* from *Werther* is known for its excellence. Sad to say, none of the other arias provide such effective vehicles for Swarthout. A certain lack of expressive coloration in the *Samson* excerpts and an unsubtle coyness

in the Offenbach air are limiting factors.

—C.J.L.

HANDEL: *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day*; Lore Hoffman (soprano), Walter Ludwig (tenor), The Rudolf Lamy Choir, and Symphony Orchestra of Radio Berlin conducted by Arthur Rother. Urania LP disc UURLP-7023, \$5.95. **HANDEL:** *The Delingen Te Deum*; Katharine Hansel (soprano), Rachel Koerner (alto), George Barritt (tenor), Harold Ronk (baritone), The Chancel Choir of the National Presbyterian Church, and The National Gallery Orchestra conducted by Richard Bales. WCFM LP disc No. 6, \$5.95.

▲HERE are two examples of Handel's occasional music. The *Cecilia Ode* (not

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to be confused with *Alexander's Feast* also written to commemorate St. Cecilia's day) is set to John Dryden's exquisite verses and is in the line of other significant English works composed from Purcell's time forward that are traditionally dedicated to the patron saint of music. It is a magnificent score. Following the general pattern of musical odes, Handel's work is a free treatment of the text in an alternation of solo, chorus, and orchestra not unlike the cantata construction. Its instrumentation calls for a flute, two oboes, a bassoon, two trumpets, harp, organ, drums and strings. It is well performed here by Walter Ludwig, the Rudolf Lamy Choir (which unfortunately sings in German) and the Radio Berlin Orchestra under Arthur Rother. The outstanding participant, however, is Lore Hoffman whose vocal resources and style are decidedly uncommon. One would like to hear more from her. All of this spirited and efficient work is, more's the pity, somewhat poorly recorded. The sound is often pinched and nasal and the balance between solo voice and orchestra is most of the time far from accurate.

If the recording of Richard Bales' forces in *The Dettingen Te Deum* is superior to the German group, the executants themselves are well below the European standards. In addition, *The Dettingen Te Deum*, which was composed to celebrate the victory of the British army over the French in the battle of Dettingen on June 27, 1743 (an important victory for England in the War of the Austrian Succession), is not out of Handel's top drawer. To be sure, there are lovely numbers like the first three-part chorus and the alto solo, *All the earth doth worship Thee*. There is, however, not a succession of numbers moving or brilliant enough to bring the cumulative impact that is available in other Handelian products designed for the pomp and circumstance of ceremonial occasions.

—C.J.L.

GREAT TENOR ARIAS by Jussi Bjoerling — *I Pagliacci* — *Vesti la giubba* (Leoncavallo); *Faust—Salut,*

demeure (Gounod); *Cavalleria Rusticana* — *Addio alla madre* (Mascagni); *La Bohème* — *Che gelida manina* (Puccini); *L'Africana* — *O Paradiso* (Meyerbeer); *Carmen* — *Air de la fleur* (Bizet); with RCA Victor Orchestra conducted by Renato Cellini and Orchestra conducted by Nils Grevillius. Victor 10" LP LM-105, \$4.67.

▲OF BJOERLING'S original recordings, made in Europe, only the arias from *Carmen* and *Cavalleria* are included; the others are evidently recent remakes. While the noted tenor is still an artist to reckon with, his singing in his older records was freer and more fluent. For spontaneity and beauty of sound, there is nothing quite as appealing as his original *Bohème* aria, sung in the proper key. However, the newer recordings are a definite advance in quality and balance over the older ones.

—J.N.

HIGHLIGHTS from *Cavalleria Rusticana* (Mascagni) and *I Pagliacci* (Leoncavallo); Jussi Bjoerling, Zinka Milanov, Robert Merrill, Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops Orchestra, Frieder Weissmann and the RCA Victor Orchestra and Nils Grevillius and Orchestra (in the former), Licia Albanese, Robert Merrill, Jan Peerce, Leonard Warren, RCA Victor Orchestra conducted by Erich Leinsdorf, Jean Paul Morel and Frieder Weissman (in the latter). RCA Victor LP disc LM-1160, \$5.45.

▲THE SELECTIONS from *Cavalleria* are the *Siciliano* (Bjoerling), *Il cavallo scalpita* (Merrill), *Voi lo sapete* (Milanov), *Intermezzo* (Fiedler), and *Addio alla madre* (Bjoerling). Those from *Pagliacci* are the *Prologue* (Warren), *Nedda's Ballatella* (Albanese), the *Love Duel* (Albanese and Merrill), and *Vesti la giubba* (Peerce).

The singing is rather uneven, and mixed orchestras certainly alter the style. The best performances are Milanov's *Voi lo sapete*, Bjoerling's *Addio*, Warren's *Prologue*, Albanese and Merrill's duet, and Peerce's *Vesti la giubba*. Victor engineers

have done a good job on the transfer of these former 78 releases to LP. —J.N.

✓ **MENOTTI:** *The Medium* (Recording from the Film); **Marie Powers, Beverly Dame, Belva Kibler, Donald Morgan, Anna Maria Alberghetti, Symphony Orchestra of Rome, Radio Italiana** conducted by **Thomas Schippers**. Mercury 2-12" LP discs, MGL 7, \$9.70.

▲THIS is the sound track from Gian-Carlo Menotti's recent motion-picturization of his popular opera. It is complete except for the percussion overture with which the credit titles are shown. Although this album comes from an extremely successful motion-picture it must stand comparison, as a recorded performance, with the Ballet Society production (Columbia SL-154). The earlier recording is less thin and the enunciation is, in general, better. In addition, it comes boxed with another Menotti work, *The Telephone*. The sound-track recording, however, contains all the new music — about half an hour of it — which Menotti wrote for the film. He had originally included it in the theatre version but production costs had forced him to abandon it. Hence it is quite integral to the work and, moreover, contains a carnival scene which is some of the best music in the whole opera. As the discs were taken directly from the film there are a number of sound-effects which either lend realism or obscure the music, as you prefer. Marie Powers is perhaps even more forceful in the Mercury discs than in the Columbia and Miss Alberghetti's interpretation of the young girl is, by and large, as convincing vocally as it is on the screen. The other singers, the orchestra and the conductor in each version are completely competent. If one likes the work, the Mercury recording may be preferred because it contains more music. —D.R.

✓ **PALESTRINA:** *Missa "Iste Confessor"; Missa Sine Nomine; The Welch Chorale* directed by **James B. Welch**. Allegro LP disc, ALG-3016, \$5.95.

▲WITH THIS DISC two more Palestrina masses make their recording debuts. The "*Iste Confessor*," among the best known of the shorter masses, is founded on the Latin hymn of the same name. The hymn is divided into seven motifs and these appear, in some form or other, in almost every measure of the work. This elaborate and ingenious construction results in a very striking musical effect. Palestrina wrote at least two *Sine Nomine* Masses. This one is not the most famous, the one called "a marvel of contrapuntal dexterity but . . . not one of Pierluigi's most genial works." This is a most genial short mass based on a theme by Maillard, *Je suis deshéritée*, from one of the latter's own masses. The work is a tender exploration of the Gregorian theme, done with unobtrusive facility.

The Welch Chorale do better work here than on its first Palestrina disc (Allegro AL 70) partially because the music is not so difficult, and partially because the sopranos and tenors seem more sure of themselves. As always Mr. Welch does not dress up the music but presents it as written. The recording is clear but sounds rather boxed in — as though it were recorded in a small room. —D.R.

MOZART: *Don Giovanni* — *Dalla sua pace and Il mio tesoro*; **Jan Peerce** (tenor) with **RCA Victor Orchestra** conducted by **Erich Leinsdorf**. Victor 45 rpm disc 49-3302, \$1.10.

▲PEERCE has hardly the ideal voice for Don Ottavio but he brings a welcome manly quality to the role. If he were able to modulate his voice — to sing pianissimo

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— his *Dalla sua pace* would have been one of the best on record. His fine musicianship is shown in *Il mio tesoro*, which he sings at a slightly faster pace than most. This is an aria that should not be dragged, though it asks for a bit more subtlety than it receives here. Leinsdorf is hardly the most sensitive conductor. The recording is excellent in the approved manner which features the singer.

—J.N.

SONGS OF SCANDINAVIA: *Im Feld ein Mädchen singt; Varen flyktar Hastigt; Illalle; Var det en Drom: (Sibelius); En Scane; Med en Vandililje; Modersorg; Tak for dit Raad (Grieg); Tunturilauluja (Laponian Mountain Songs); Lieder der Liebe (Songs of Love) (Kilpinin); Tii Niemela (soprano) with Pentti Koskimies at the piano. WCFM LP disc LP-5, \$5.95.*

▲MME. NIEMELA is a well known and admired *lieder* singer in her native Finland and other Scandinavian countries. She has toured successfully in concert through the United States. Hers is a contemplative artistry with a feeling for the inner meaning of the songs she sings. Her voice — reed-like in quality — is well schooled. Her musicianly husband provides excellent accompaniments. At least two of the Sibelius songs are new to records in this country. Grieg's *Modersorg* is a first recording, and so too are the *Laponian Mountain Songs* of Kilpinin. Hüsch recorded four of the *Songs of Love* in H.M.V.'s Kilpinin Song Society issues. The Finnish composer, Yrjö Kilpinin, is regarded in Europe as a *lieder* composer in the tradition of Hugo Wolf. Those who do not cherish the older traditions call him old-fashioned, but this is unjust for he is a mastercraftsman in his art and has equally as strong an individual appeal as many of the famous *lieder* composers of times gone by.

As a *lieder* recital, this has its attributes not only for the fine artistry of the participants but for the less familiar character of the music.

—J.N.

TRAPP FAMILY SINGERS conducted by Franz Wasner. Concert Hall CHS 1101, \$5.95.

▲HERE is another pleasant collection from the famous singing family. As always, it is extremely eclectic. Included are a number of nice things such as a lovely rendition of Gibbons' *The Silver Swan* and some fine works by Orlandus Lassus and Antonio Scandelli. Of course the disc also includes *Old Black Joe* and the prayer from *Hansel und Grete*. There are seventeen selections in all. Again Concert Hall has recorded both voices and instruments with fidelity.

—D.R.

VERDI: Rigoletto — *Caro nome*; **MOORE-von FLOTOW: The Last Rose of Summer**; Anna Maria Alberghetti (soprano) with Metropolitan Opera Orchestra conducted by Alfredo Antonini. Columbia 78 rpm disc 73264, \$1.25.

▲A RECORDING is like a photograph, it often reveals more about its subject than people notice in life. Hearing Miss Alberghetti on television, one was struck by her simple manner, her apparently effortless singing. Hers was a winning personality with much of the charm of unspoiled youth. Hearing her from the record leaves me far less impressed, for her inequalities are too apparent. Her upper voice is quite remarkable and generally well reproduced, but her middle and lower voice seems the product of a different entity. It is lacking in similar quality. Hers is hardly a satisfactory account of Gilda's difficult aria, which she paces rather slowly, thus imposing needless taxation on her vocal resources. But a girl of fifteen is not yet the woman that she may be in three years or in five. Patti began her career at sixteen but one suspects her vocal accomplishments were more secure and better developed. As a souvenir of a young artist that has caught the fancy of the multitudes, this disc may have its place in the scheme of things today, but I wonder if Miss Alberghetti will not wish to replace it in a few short years. She

has been given excellent orchestral support and all too realistic reproduction.

—J.N.

HIGHLIGHTS from Verdi's *La Traviata*; Maria Cebotari (soprano), Helge Roswaenge (tenor), Heinrich Schlusnus (baritone) with Chorus and Orchestra Berlin State Opera conducted by Hans Steinkoff. Urania LP disc URLP 7011, \$5.95.

▲IN JUNE 1949, Maria Cebotari died of cancer in her thirty-ninth year. She had long been the idol of European opera houses and after the war had come to England to win new laurels. In Germany, Vienna, and in Italy, she was equally successful as she sang with fluency both in German and Italian. The Italians admired her Violetta so much that they starred her in a picture about an imaginary prima-donna who makes a comeback in the opera house in the role for which Cebotari was justly famed in the opera house. Though a sentimental romance, that picture is remembered for her beautiful singing and the lovely quality of her speaking voice.

The present recordings were made from a broadcast by Berlin Radio sometime in the early 1940s. It was Cebotari's sons, Fritz and Peter, who brought their existence to the attention of one of Urania's representatives. Though sung in German, these excerpts from *La Traviata* are nonetheless appreciable for the beauty and brilliance of Cebotari's singing as well as her interpretative powers. This disc is assuredly one of the finest mementos of her vital artistry. The excerpts are the two duets and Violetta's final scene from Act I, Alfredo's aria from Act II and most of the duet between Violetta and Alfredo's father, sections of the gambling scene with the finale complete, and the duet *Parigi, o caro* from the last act. Roswaenge is a healthy, virile Alfredo, but Schlusnus for all his smooth singing is a rather cool and detached Germont. Listening to Cebotari's projection of the German language, so alien to Verdi's music, one feels no antipathy toward its sounds. Judging from this performance, I would say that Cebotari must have been one of

the greatest Violettas of her time.

—P.H.R.

FAMOUS WAGNERIAN TENOR ARIAS — *Lohengrin* — *Höchstes vertrauen* and *In fernem Land*; *Die Meistersinger* — *Am stillen Herd* and *Preislied*; *Die Walküre* — *Siegmond's Monologue* and *Liebeslied*; *Tannhäuser* — *Rome Narrative*; Set Svanholm (tenor) with RCA Victor Orchestra conducted by Frieder Weissmann. RCA Victor LP LM-1155, \$5.72.

▲AFTER YEARS of hefty tenors, some with similar types of voices and others with wondrous tones like Melchior's, Svanholm's lean figure is a welcome sight in the theater. At his best, he is a sterling artist, but some of his singing is on the spare side and by no means as satisfying to the ear as was Melchior's. It would be nice if Victor would issue a similar record of Melchior's Wagnerian arias. As much as we admire Svanholm in the theater, we prefer Melchior on records.

—J.N.

YEATS: The Only Jealousy of Emer (a poetic play); Cast directed by Bonnie Bird; Music composed and directed by Lou Harrison. Esoteric LP disc ES 506, \$5.95.

▲YEATS' VERSE can make its impression felt through the ear without the aid of the seen actor or the printed word. It is thus a logical choice for recorded presentation. This play, too, appears to good advantage on discs. It is one of his profound, yet also one of his most simple. Obviously influenced by the Japanese *No* theatre, which he loved, the drama concerns the battle over the soul of a man by those who love him against the spirits who would have him — but such a bald résumé does not begin to do it justice. The performance, based on ones given by virtually the same cast at both Reed and Hunter colleges, is quite professional. It makes no attempt to produce a "stage" atmosphere, yet contains both enunciation and integrity. The music might pall after several hearings but it serves the valuable function of knitting the drama into an entity. Both actors and musicians are enhanced by a very fine recording. —D.R.

OPERA AT HOME

(Continued from page 42)

material that has been used by others for profit or loss. For the historically minded, this large-scale cribbing indicates the opera's riches and its popularity.

Goddard Lieberson, the producer of this much-needed recording, thinks that those who know only a few of the set pieces from *Porgy* will — upon acquaintance of the whole work — be surprised to find these are but a few of the jewels from a veritable treasure house. I think that this is at least a tenable point of view. There is, to be sure, an abundance of first-class melodic material and a variety of rhythmic fancy that is indeed masterful. Moreover, the libretto makes sense and moves along easily enough. On the other hand, a knowledge of the whole work is bound to reveal that Gershwin had no little trouble in making recitative passages sound natural, that his work lacks contrapuntal tension, and that he orchestrated with less than a sure hand. Perhaps, however, these flaws merely show the extraordinary strength of the work's virtues. An opera that can be successful in theatre on just a satisfactory book and a few musical elements would seem to prove the healthful vigor of its really fine qualities.

Columbia has, from any point of view, lavished care and love on this venture. It has provided enough members of the memorable original cast to give the whole production style, and it has taken from the New York City Opera for the title roles Lawrence Winters (he almost makes one forget Todd Duncan's *Porgy*) and Camilla Williams, who use their vocal gifts without any personal or star-quality insistence. The remaining members of the cast, most of them long associated with this opera, are satisfying in just about every way. The orchestral work is of unusual excellence and the conducting of Lehman Engel is eminently capable. There is also a recording to support some claims that nobody in the world gets any more

realistic reproduction than Columbia accomplishes in its 30th Street studio.

Altogether a handsome presentation of an uncommonly significant work. —C.J.L.

* * *

MASSNET: *Manon*; Janine Micheau, Libero De Luca, Roger Bourdin, Chorus and Orchestra of the Opera-Comique conducted by Albert Wolff. London LP set.

▲This recording will be reviewed next month by Mr. Max de Schauensee, the Philadelphia critic.

* * *

At the moment of going to press, we learn that Columbia will release a complete performance of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger* next month, made this past summer at Bayreuth.

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